1: Pelzer S-5 (1940-1941) 1945 AL1 Southeast Asia AL4

gated fields. One of the great advantages of garden culture over field culture is that there is always something ready to harvest from the former and therefore something to sell when money for daily household needs becomes scarce. Another advantage is that the garden supplies the family with a great variety of side dishes rich in vitamins; the vegetable proteins of the garden produce are also of high value.

As to the possibilities of improving garden culture, these two authors state:

> It is very evident that an improvement of the compound horticulture is a very difficult problem through the highly varied and dense planting of these compounds as a result of which they come to resemble a very complicated symbiosis. But for all this it must be possible by systematic investigation to improve not only the quality but also the quantity of the production. It may be said that the compounds with their story or layer formation superficially considered will find no favour in the eyes of western agriculture, but they are an essential link in the native production apparatus.[3]

The alarming decline in the welfare of the people of Java in the face of a mounting population prompted Netherlands Indies officials to examine every possibility of improving the peasants' condition. This accounts for the studies of Ochse and Terra. Lacking detailed studies outside Java, we are obliged to depend upon scattered references of uneven value.

Credner states that in Thailand practically every house has a few trees on the lot, and the villages are often hidden by tree clusters. The greatest intensification of garden culture is found on the right bank of the Mae Nam Chao Phraya (the Menam) in Bangkok Noi, just opposite Bangkok. Here irrigation is employed in garden culture, a technique not usually found in Southeastern Asia. The gardens are surrounded by walls 1 meter high and are traversed by trenches 2 meters apart. The beds between the trenches are elevated. The trenches work both as drains and as irrigation ditches. Small sluices control the water. In the gardens there is a great variety of fruit trees and palms which climbers, such as *Piper betle* L., use as supports. In the trenches the peasants grow lotus and water chestnut (*Trapa natans* L.).[4] Zimmerman, in his survey of rural Thailand, points out that in most regions the peasants rely too much on one crop, rice, and he recommends in several instances improvements in the cultivation of the home lots so that families may have a better supply of fruits and, above all, of vegetables. In the Khlong Rangsit section he observed that "on account of the lack of homestead and village sites among the people there is no gardening and home production of food." [5] This observation may be applied to Southeastern Asia in general. Wherever the dominant form of land tenure is tenancy the flimsy shack of the tenant has no mixed fruit and vegetable garden around it, for his status is much too uncertain. A tenant

[3] Ochse and Terra: *op. cit.*, pp. 371–372.
[4] Credner: Siam, 1935, p. 246.
[5] Zimmerman: Siam, 1931, p. 307.

1: Pelzer S-5 (1940-1941) 1945 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1

who does not know where he will be the next year cannot be expected to plant fruit trees. Under these conditions the diet is reduced to the simplest foods and is usually deficient.

Zimmerman criticizes some of the characteristics of garden culture in the Thai part of the Malay Peninsula. The improvements that he recommends show that he has approached the gardens with a Western eye, looking for fruit trees "in rows at proper spaces, not scattered as is the case now." [6] He notices lack of tilling, an observation that could be duplicated in every country of Southeastern Asia. As a matter of fact, it is fortunate that the gardens—especially those that have many fruit trees and palms—are not clean-cultivated; otherwise erosion would have caused the same damage here that it has caused in the Westerners' rubber, tea, and coffee plantations—these were planted in rows and kept clean until the discovery was made that soil erosion is extremely severe under such conditions. Pendleton remarks:

> The average Occidental, accustomed as he is to clean cultivated orchards and vineyards in temperate zones, is inclined to keep a plantation in the tropics likewise cultivated. This is now quite generally recognized as a mistake. . . . Near Songkla [in southern Thailand] . . . are considerable plantings of fruit trees, planted as if they were forest trees. . . . Annually, before harvesting the fruit, the undergrowth is slashed and left on the ground, but there is no stirring of the soil or other cultivation. The results are excellent, and there is no soil deterioration, no catastrophic erosion, no expense for cultivation.[7]

There is little literature on the importance of garden culture among the Malays of British Malaya. According to Grist,

> fruit cultivation is of little more than local importance. The total area under fruit, other than pineapples, is estimated to be 63,000 acres. . . . This area does not take into account the numerous small compounds surrounding Malay homesteads, in which a few fruit trees are planted and which, in the aggregate, must amount to a very considerable area. Although certain fruits acquire a reputation in particular localities, the distribution of the fruits is scattered throughout the country. For instance, North Johore is noted for its durians, Malacca for dukus [*Lansium domesticum* Jack], Penang for rambutans, but in point of fact, equally good quality fruit of these kinds can be found in other areas.[8]

Malaya lacks the detailed information about gardens and their economic importance that is found in Java, for instance, where the garden area of each village is known, because in Malaya there is no population pressure and therefore no need for exact field studies and careful inventories of the source of food supply.

The Philippines are like Malaya in respect to garden culture. Some districts around Manila Bay have specialized in such fruits as mangoes,

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[7] Pendleton: "Some Interrelations," 1939, p. 50.
[8] Grist: An Outline of Malayan Agriculture, 1936, p. 228.

18: Firth E-4 (no date) 1950 ALl Southeast Asia ALl

for his wife—but he is equally likely to put it into a piece of equipment or to hire some land. To understand the position of the peasant one must realize the structure of the economic system of which he is a part, and the values of his social system.

The peasant economy must not be thought of as simply a subsistence economy. It has a complex marketing structure which, even apart from Western influences, had an elaborate series of middlemen for making possible the diffusion of cloth, salt, iron, dried fish, spices, and other goods. The system of exchange has been intensified, and the reactions of different types of producers made more sensitive by the influence of the West. On the one side are the Western markets for primary products—coffee, spices, tobacco, copra, kapok, and, above all, rubber—the quick response to which has demonstrated how alive the Asiatic peasant is to making money if the opportunity offers. On the other side are the Western types of consumer goods, novel, attractively presented, easy to use—ranging from lamp oil, imported cigarettes, and cornflour for babies, to electric torches, bicycles, and the cinema. Conservative in his techniques of production, the peasant has shown himself enterprising in his consumption. The result has been that at many points, almost without realizing it, the peasant has become geared to the Western economic system. In the early days of European contact, he had often to be pushed as well as tempted into producing for the Western market. The scathing book, *Max Havelaar*, by the author calling himself 'Multatuli'—later known to be Douwes Dekker—has shown the kind of abuses that resulted from pushing the peasant into an enforced relation to the Western market. But naturally many of these links have been of his own seeking. In the last resort, it is the peasant's own scheme of values, his degree of acceptance of the goods and services which the West offers and which he transmutes to some extent in receiving, which determines his economic destiny.

But for the most part, the peasant has been incapable of perceiving the processes at work. The field is too vast for his comprehension. His reactions to the crisis and depression of the nineteen-thirties were direct and rational as they came under his personal observation. When prices fell he increased production of the export crops to maintain his cash returns; when that failed he retired from the struggle to utilize his backlog of subsistence cropping. But like many a farmer elsewhere, he had not understood much more than the immediate market situation. The pressure of the West has provided the peasant with a new range of wants from which he cannot rid himself even should he wish, and markets for his labour and raw materials which are an inducement to him to modify his habits. A new administrative system has given him fresh legal framework for many of his acts. A new system of taxation, though often lighter than before, is more methodical in its pursuit of defaulters. His land, the foundation of his existence, has for the most part been preserved to him, and indeed the security for his legal title to it has been much improved. But alien planta-

18: Firth E-4 (no date) 1950 ALl Southeast Asia ALl
Chinese

427 But the alien planta-
565 tions and even alien smallholders have threatened to grasp at it, and the
177 advances of Western medicine, so beneficial in many ways, have only accelerated the rate of increase of the population which has to seek a livelihood from it. In most parts of South East Asia the peasant is the actual owner of the land he tills, often legally under some agreement with
426 the State. But his rights to the produce are often severely limited by a heavy burden of indebtedness. The real effects of this may be less than people sometimes think, because when the debts are spread among neighbours and kinsfolk interest may be waived, repayment is sometimes protracted or ignored, and the debt may be serviced by other than material means. But there is no doubt that the peasant producer is badly hampered by his debt load. It is most pressing when debt is contracted to a member of an alien ethnic group, an Indian or a Chinese, for whom the transaction is a purely commercial one.

563 The role of alien Asiatic ethnic groups is one of the most significant
565 features in the economic and political life of the peasantry of South East
177 Asia today. For many centuries, Indian and Chinese trading influences
178 have met in the South East Asian region, and Indian religious concepts
439 have penetrated deep into many of its social systems. But for more than four hundred years the dominant commercial and political note has tended to be sounded by Europeans. Now the balance is altering. Colonialism may have set the modern structure of South East Asian society, but the patterns will persist when the colonial Powers have withdrawn. To this new society the Chinese above all have the economic key. In Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, the Philippines, and Java, the Chinese have penetrated the economic system and taken over crucial functions. They have shared in much of the wholesale import trade, they have attained pre-eminence in retailing vital imported goods to the peasant, and they act as middlemen for the collection, storage, and processing of peasant export products. As part of this process they often finance the peasant producer by advances on his crop, gaining a double profit by giving part of these advances in goods, not cash. The Chinese achievement has been remarkable. They have been kept on the margin both of the peasant society with which they deal, and of the European society with which at a later stage their growing wealth would allow them to associate. Though lacking any formal political power, which in the Orient as elsewhere is so often the passport to success, they have built up a trading structure of extraordinary toughness, elasticity, and elaboration.

565 The wider political implications of this are not my concern here. But
609 it is important to note three points in connexion with the peasant theme.
186 One is the xenophobic reaction of the local urban dwellers and of peasants
578 too, which has periodically found expression against the Chinese, as traders or residents in South East Asia, in the form of riots and other disturbances.
563 Another is the reaction of the Chinese, whose economic strength has given
241 them confidence, and who are now prepared to stand by their claim to a